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Word on the street

IT comes round once a year; it always gets drinkers and smokers worried about how much they're going to have to pay for their vices; and it gets everyone talking about taxes. Last week, in the Budget, Chancellor Kenneth Clarke announced that income tax was coming down, beer and wine staying the same and the price of petrol, cigarettes and car tax was going up.

So, was it a good one for Hackney folk? Do you feel it was fair, or are we just being diddled out of more and more of our money? Gazette reporter Fiona Mitchell and photographer Rick Matthews went out to the Narrows in Mare Street to find out.

Was it an up and down kind of Budget for you?



● **Richie Smith.**

● **BIG ISSUE** seller Richie Smith, of Cambridge Heath, reckons it was a Budget for the well-off. The 31-year-old, who used to be a circus clown, adds: "The Tories were just out to corner the market for votes. And then alcohol didn't go up because the politicians all like a tippie."

● **SANDRA LAKEY**, of Casimir Road,



● **Sandra Lakey.**

Upper Clapton, is against the decision to take a penny off income tax. Sandra, who's 48 and works at a doctor's surgery in Hackney, says: "I actually think they should have put income tax up because then they could put more into the NHS. We've got to pay for it somehow. Alcohol could have gone up probably because people will drink anyway."



● **David Holder.**

● **DAVID HOLDER**, of Dalston Lane, says putting up the price of cigarettes is good. The 34-year-old, who is unemployed, goes on: "For health reasons, cigarettes and alcohol should be more expensive, to try and discourage people from smoking and drinking so much."

● **ANITA GUY**, who works at the job



● **Anita Guy.**

centre in Mare Street, is not keen on the increase in the cost of cigarettes and keeping beer the same. The 24-year-old adds: "I didn't really hear that much about the Budget, but from what people are saying, they're going to go abroad for cigarettes and alcohol anyway."

● **CHARLES MILLER**, 59, is furious about



● **Charles Miller.**

the Budget. "It stunk," he says. "Anyone with money was OK in this Budget, but it's killing small businesses. They gave us a penny and then nicked two quid off us by putting up the price of diesel and road tax and everything else we spend our money on," adds Charles, who lives in Malpas Road, Hackney, and has a flower stall in Mare Street.



● **Agnes Mehmel.**

● **"I DON'T** think this Budget is going to make all that much difference," says Agnes Mehmel, 70, of Kenworthy Road, Homerton. "But it definitely wasn't a fair one because they've just taken off one thing and then put it on something else." Agnes, who used to work at the old Hackney hospital, adds: "I think it was all a bit of a con."

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